

**STILLWATER STATE FOREST**  
**STRYKER BASIN TIMBER SALE PROJECT**  
**INITIAL PROPOSAL**  
**May 5, 2014**



## **INTRODUCTION**

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Stillwater Unit, is proposing the Stryker Basin Timber Sale Project. The project is in the initial stages of public involvement and project development for an environmental analysis. This proposal would harvest 5 to 11 million board feet (MMbf) of sawtimber from portions of 3,141 acres of State Trust land located approximately 5 miles east of Stryker and 22 miles northwest of Whitefish. Harvesting would occur in portions of sections 13, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 36, T34N, R24W and Sections 18, 19 and 30, T34N, R23W (see attached map).

This project is part of an ongoing effort to produce revenue for the State Trusts while maintaining a healthy and productive forest into the future. The Common Schools Trust (kindergarten through grade 12) would be the beneficiary of income generated by this project.

## **COMMENT PERIOD**

This notice initiates a 30-day comment period, which provides the public an opportunity to become involved at the initial stage of the project. In addition, this document provides general information about the proposal and its objectives. If requested, another notice with greater detail will be sent once the project progresses and proposed harvest units have been defined.

Comments and concerns you may have about harvesting timber and the associated activities in this area, which include roadwork and site preparation, are welcome and will be considered during analysis and design of the project.

The comment period will remain open until June 4, 2014.

## **PROJECT PARAMETERS**

The lands involved in this proposed project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the support of various school trusts (see above). The State Board of Land Commissioners and DNRC are required by law to administer these lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long term for these beneficiary institutions, as required in *Section 77-1-202, Montana Codes Annotated (MCA)*.

DNRC would also consider other opportunities that would produce long-term revenue to the State trusts. However, the proposals must show the ability to produce long-term revenue comparable to timber management. *Administrative Rules of Montana 36.11.451 through 36.11.456* address the option of DNRC to accept applications for a *Timber Conservation License in Lieu of Timber Sale* and implement the bidding process for the License. A written notice of intent to request this License and the \$100 fee must be delivered to the Stillwater Unit office within 60 days of the date this Initial Proposal was provided. For further information, please contact Mike McMahon at Stillwater State Forest (406) 881-2670.

DNRC will manage the lands involved in this project according to the philosophy and standards in the State Forest Land Management Plan, which states:

*"Our premise is that the best way to produce long-term income for the trust is to manage intensively for healthy and biologically diverse forests. Our understanding is that a diverse forest is a dynamic forest that will produce the most reliable and highest long-term revenue stream... In the foreseeable future, timber management will continue to be DNRC's primary source of revenue and primary tool for achieving biodiversity objectives."*



Furthermore, the project design will follow *Montana's Administrative Rules for Forest Management (Annotated Rules of Montana 36.11.401 through 36.11.456)* and the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) when it applies.

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

- Generate revenue for the Trusts while ensuring forest productivity into the future.
- Promote biodiversity on State ownership by managing for appropriate or desired stand structures and species compositions based on ecological characteristics, such as topography, habitat type, disturbance regime, and unique characteristics.
- Contribute to the annual targets of timber-harvest volumes of DNRC and the Northwestern Land Office. DNRC is required by State law (77-5-221 through 223, MCA) to harvest approximately 57.6 MMbf of timber annually and produce revenue over time.
- Apply Best Management Practices (BMPs) or meet design criteria necessary to promote long term water quality during logging and road construction operations. Road construction may include site improvements, new temporary construction, obliteration, and maintenance.
- To the extent practicable, improve segments of road into the project area which may be open to motorized public activity as defined by the Stillwater Unit's Transportation Plan provided in the HCP.
- Locate, design and construct those roads described in the Stillwater Unit's Transportation Plan that are necessary to access potential harvest units.

## **GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT AREA AND OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE AREA TO MEET THE OBJECTIVES**

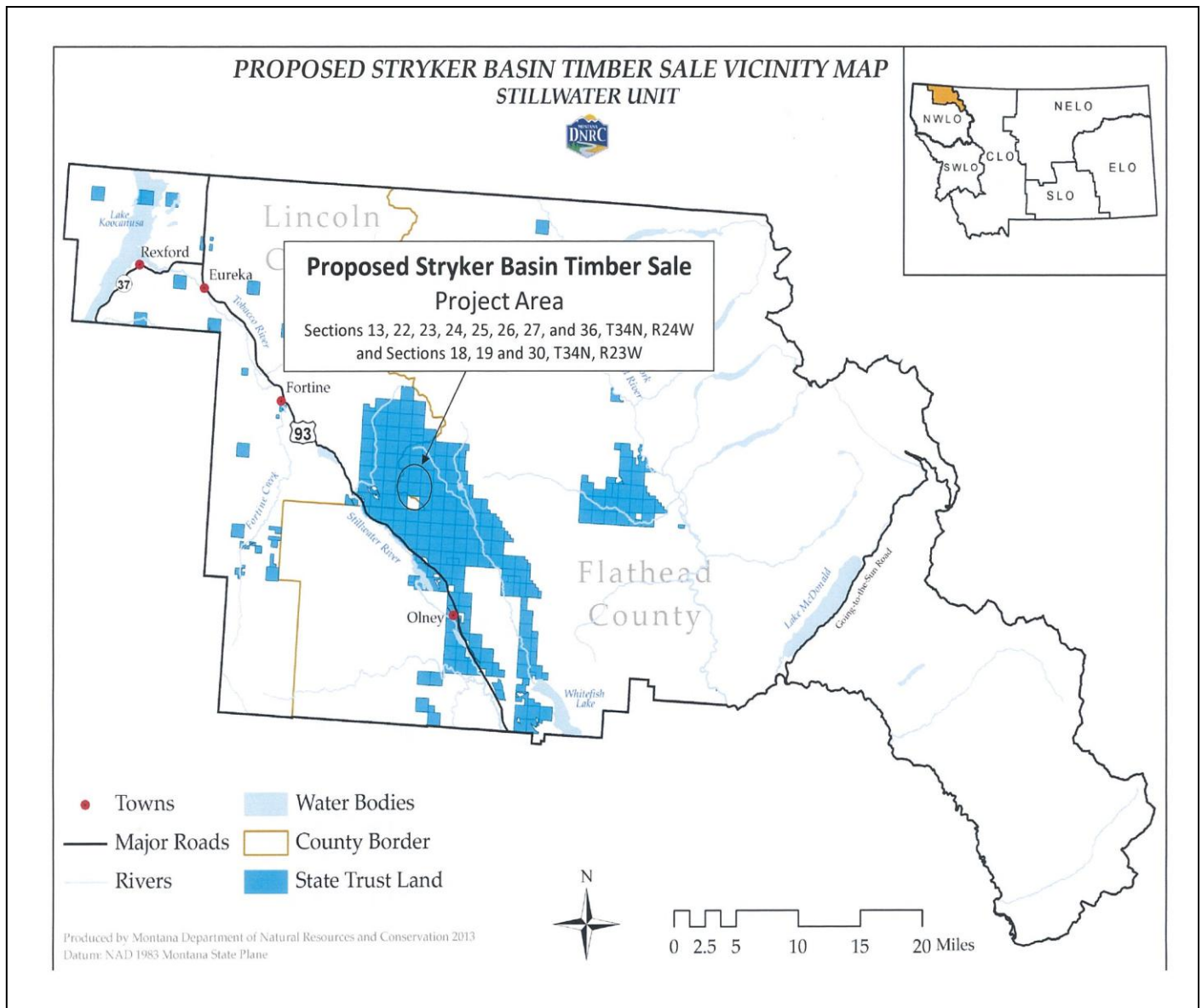
1. The project area is located approximately 22 air miles northwest of Whitefish and approximately 5 miles east of Stryker.
2. The majority of the project area is composed of mixed conifer and subalpine fir covertypes. Due to the species composition of these areas, mostly Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir, regeneration harvests such as seedtree with reserves and clearcut with reserves would be proposed.
3. The project objectives are to establish regeneration of the desired species mix, improve vigor/tree growth, meet the *Forest Management Rules* in relation to wildlife, fisheries, and water quality as well as provide improved access for potential fire suppression efforts.
4. Portions of the project area contain older stands (150-years-plus in age). As with all stands in the project area, these areas are being analyzed for health and potential management opportunities.
5. Both cable and ground-based harvest systems would be utilized.
6. Broadcast burning and mechanical site prep would be utilized to reduce the hazardous slash fuels and prepare the sites for new regeneration.
7. The proposed roadwork includes incorporating BMPs for site improvements. Existing roads will be used where feasible. As part of the Stillwater Unit's 50-year transportation plan adopted with the HCP, approximately .6 miles of road would be considered for construction; please refer to the attached map for the approximate location. Public motorized use of the new road would be restricted. In addition, temporary spur roads may be constructed to reach the proposed harvest areas; these segments of road would be closed following harvesting activities. Several bridge removals / installations as well as various stream crossings may be completed to allow access and minimize the risk of sediment delivery.
8. The State is still completing:
  - reconnaissance surveys,



- timber-stand inventories,
- watershed and sediment-source surveys,
- noxious-weed surveys, and
- an assessment of transportation/logging systems.

## HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS

Please submit your comments by June 4, 2014 to: Montana DNRC Stillwater Unit, c/o Zack Miller or Pete Evans, P.O. Box 164, Olney, MT 59927; call this information to 406-881-2371; or email Zack Miller at [zmiller@mt.gov](mailto:zmiller@mt.gov) or Pete Evans at [pevans@mt.gov](mailto:pevans@mt.gov). If you do not have comments or concerns at this time, but wish to stay involved in the project, please contact Zack Miller or Pete Evans by June 4, 2014, you will be removed from this project's mailing list.





# Proposed Stryker Basin Timber Sale Project Area



Sections 13, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 36, T34N, R24W  
and Sections 18, 19 and 30, T34N, R23W

